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The Tables turned against the Presbyterians: *RE*

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REASONS

AGAINST THE

REPEAL

OF THE

Sacramental TEST.

BY A

General Assembly of SCOTLAND.

APAPER appeared some Time ago with this Title, *The Lords Reasons for repealing the Sacramental Test as the Revolution.*

This Title is artful and fit to deceive: One would think by it, that the House of Lords of England were for this Repeal, and gave their Reasons in some Conference with the Commons in the same manner that they debated the Affair of the Abdications.

If this passes, 'tis well: And then the Dissenters here have the Credit of so great an Authority in favour of their present Designs. But if the Art be observed and objected to, there is an Answer ready. We did not mean this: The short Preface to the Reasons shews, that we did not. We say only, that it was proposed to bring in a Bill to repeal the Test Act, for which Repeal several Lords offered the following Reasons.

I should allow this Answer to be a fair one, if the Fact were even here truly represented. But since 'tis quite otherwise, I can't but suspect Art and Contrivance in the whole.

The Truth is, these are the Reasons only of six Lords, and they were given by these six Lords, not when the Repeal of the Test Act was under Consideration, but when after that Repeal was in vain attempted, another Expedient was proposed for the Ease of Protestant Dissenters.

To prove this, I shall set down the Account of this whole Matter given by the Historian from whom the Reasons are verbatim transcribed. Kennet's Collect. v. 3. p. 553.

When the Bill for abrogating the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, &c. was under Consideration in the House of Lords of England, a Clause was prepared to take away the Necessity of receiving the Sacrament to make a Man capable of enjoying any Office, Employment or Place of Trust.

This Clause, says the Historian, being drawn up and reported to the House, was rejected by a great Majority, who thought it necessary to preserve the Government in the Hands of those that were of the National Church and Religion: And yet seven Lords protested against limiting Offices by the Sacramental Test; the Lord Delamere, Stamford, North and Grey, Chesterfield, Wharton, Lovelace and Vaughan, who, on March 21. dissented for these Reasons: 1st, That an hearty Union among Protestants, was a greater Security to the Church and State, than any Test that could be invented. 2^d, That an Obligation to receive the Sacrament in Churches, was now a Test on the Protestants, rather than on the Papists; and as long as it was so continued, there could not be that hearty and perfect Union among Protestants, as had always been wished, and was at this Time indispensably necessary. And lastly, that a greater Caution ought not to be required from such as were admitted into Offices, than from the Members of the two Houses of Parliament, who were not obliged to receive the Sacrament, to enable them to sit in either House.

When the Court had lost this Point, they made another Attempt in favour of the moderate Dissenters, which was, by inserting a Clause in the said Bill to prevent the Receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, upon any other Account than in Obedience to the Holy Institution thereof: And so provide, That any Man should be sufficiently qualified for any Office, Employment, or Place of Trust, who within a Year before or after his Admission or Entrance thereinto, did receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, either according to the Usage of the Church of England, or in any other Protestant Congregation, and could produce a Certificate under the Hands of the Ministers, and two other credible Persons. But this Clause

Clause was also rejected by a great Majority; *John Lord (Oxford, Lovelace Wharton, Montague and Paget) entered their Dissent for those Reasons.*

The Reasons follow in the very Words in which they are printed in that Paper; only that the last Sentence is dropp'd, which would have discovered the Art of the whole: 'Tis in these Words, *If it be urged still as an effectual Test to discover and keep out Papists; the taking the Sacrament in the Protestant Congregations where they are Members and known, will be at least as effectual to the Purpose.*

'Tis easy to see why this Clause was dropp'd, and to observe further, with how little Candor those Reasons are said in the last Paragraph to have been given in a former one.

I make no Reflections on this Management. Let every Man judge for himself, how fit it is to support their Cause, who desire to represent themselves as having Consciences truly scrupulous.

But as the Design of that Paper is to make use of the great Authority of *The Lords* in favour of a Repeal of the Sacramental Test, so my present Design is to urge with much more Fairness, that of a *General Assembly of Scotland* against it.

The Matter under Deliberation was not indeed the Repeal of a Sacramental Test, but the granting a Toleration. But the Reasons given in the latter Case are very obviously, and with more Strength, to be applied to the former.

The following Account of them is given in a late History of the Life and Reign of *Queen Ann.* On the first of June, An Act for a Toleration to all Protestants in the Exercise of Religious Worship, proposed by the Earl of Strathmore, being read, a Representation was offered against it, in the Name and at the Appointments of the late General Assembly, importing in Substance, That there could not be a just Ground to desire or grant a Toleration to those of the Episcopal Perswasion, seeing there was never in any Nation, a Toleration allowed, where there was no Pretence of Conscience against joint Communication. That in Scotland the People had no Scruple in their Consciences against Communion and Worship with the legal established Church, till, of late, in some Places they had been practised upon and divided by Prelatick Ministers. That Difference in Opinion about Church Government is not a sufficient Reason for Separation in Worship. That to grant a Toleration to that Party, in the present Circumstances of the Church and State, must unavoidably shake the Foundation of their present happy Constitution, overthrow those Laws upon which it was settled; needlessly disturb that Peace and Tranquillity, which the Nation had enjoy'd since the late Revolution; disquiet the Minds of her Majesty's best Subjects, increase Animosity, Confusions, Discord and Tumults; enervate Discipline, open a Door to Vice, Popery and other Errors, and bring the Nation into the same, or worse Miseries and Mischiefs from which it had been mercifully delivered. Concluding, in short they were

opposed, that to enact a Toleration for those of the Episcopal Way (which God of his infinite Mercy would be to ESTABLISH INIQUITY BY A LAW, and would bring upon the Promoters thereof, and their Families, the dreadful Guilt of all those Sins and pernicious Effects that might ensue thereupon. *Hist. of the Life and Reign of Queen Ann. Vol. p. 65.*

This Passage furnishes Occasion for many Remarks, I shall only make two very short ones, and leave the rest to every Readers Reflection.

1st. The Assembly affirms, that there was never in any Nation a Toleration allowed where there was no Pretence of Conscience against joynt Communion. Now if the Words *No Pretence* be taken strictly and universally, the Argument is not to the Purpose for which it was urged: Because those of the Episcopal Perswasion in Scotland, always had some Pretence of Conscience, whether good or bad, against joynt Communion. But if by *no Pretence* be meant no good Pretence, pray what good Pretence of Conscience have the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland against joynt Communion with the Established Church? I won't argue from hence in the same Manner that the General Assembly do, Therefore they have no Right to a Toleration. But the Argument against their being admitted into Places of Trust and Power in the State is strong, and never to be got over.

2^d. The other Remark I make is this; The Assembly says, that to enact a Toleration for those of the Episcopal Way, would be to ESTABLISH INIQUITY BY A LAW, &c. Why? It must be either because all Toleration of those of a different Perswasion in Religion is *Establishing Iniquity by a Law*; or because there is something particularly iniquitous in the Constitution of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. Take it either Way, and observe the Consequence. Let every serious Man then, who is a Member of our Established Church, consider whether those Dissenters, who either hold the general Principle, or have so bad an Opinion of an Episcopal Church, should have a Door opened for them to come into greater Power and Influence in the State. If it be said, that the Dissenters of Ireland ought not to be charged with the Principles of Scotch Presbyterians, I answer, 1st. They are their Brethren, whose Principles they have never publicly disavowed. 2^d. None are at present excluded from Employments, but those who really hold the latter of these Principles, and very probably the former: Whoever thinks *joynt Communion* with the Established Church *lawful* may be an *occasional Conformist*; consequently, may take an Employment, if he can get it. None are excluded but they who think Communion with an Episcopal Church *iniquity*. Is it then safe or prudent to open a Way for those to come into Power, who may hereafter think it Iniquity to grant a Toleration?

Wednesday next will be publish'd,

THE Dispute adjust'd, about the Proper Time of applying for Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, by shewing That No Time is proper. By the Rights Reverend Father in God, Edmund Lord Bishop of London. To which are added, The Advantages proposed by Repealing the Sacramental Test: As also, some Queries relating thereto. By the Reverend Dr. J. S. D. S. P. D.

JUST PUBLISH'D,

The Presbyterians Plea of Merit, in order to take off the Test Act, impartially considered.

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